Fixed/Mobile Terminal in rural and remote areas of the country including the State of Rajasthan. The infrastructure shall be created in those specified areas where there is no existing fixed wireless mobile coverage.

(iii) BSNL has relaxed the distance norms for laying of underground cable upto 5 kms. of telephone exchange for providing telephone connections and landline against the earlier standard of 2.5 kms.

(iv) BSNL is deploying WLL in rural areas to meet the demand of telephone connections beyond 5 kms. of telephone exchange.

(v) BSNL is deploying its mobile network to covering existing coverage and additional requirements based on customer requirements besides covering villages with population of 5,000 and above. In now planned expansions, BSNL plants to cover villages with population of 1,000 and above.

(c) and (d) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) has entered into an agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in November, 2004 for provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in remaining 66,822 unconnected villages in the country including 12,386 unconnected villages in Rajasthan. This excludes villages having population less than 100, laying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc. Out of 12,386 unconnected villages, 9,909 villages have already been provided with VPTs by BSNL as on 31st October, 2006. The remaining villages will be provided VPTs progressively by November, 2007.

Suggestions given by Talwar Commission

2596. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of extra departmental officials who are working with the Postal Service;

(b) whether Government would consider the suggestions of Talwar Commission which was appointed by the Narasimha Rao Government to enquire about the conditions of the employees; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The

number of Extra Departmental officials, now called Gramin Dak Sevaks working with Department of Posts is 2,86004 as on 31.3.2006.

(b) and (c) The following suggestions/recommendations made by the Justice Talwar Committee have already been considered and accepted by the Government:

(i) Increase in the allowance of Gramin Dak Sevaks by a factor of 3.25 for a period from 1.1.96 to 28.2.98.

(ii) Introduction of the concept of Time Related Continuity Allowance (TRCA) in respect of Gramin Dak Sevaks in lieu of monthly allowance related to work load *w.e.f.* 1.3.1998.

(iii) Increase in the amount of ex-gratia gratuity admissible to Gramin Dak Sevaks from Rs. 6,000/- to Rs. 18,000/-

(iv) Introduction of the concept of paid leave for Gramin Dak Sevak @ 10 days for every half year without the provision of carry forward or encashment.

(v) Increase in office maintenance allowance admissible to Gramin Dak Sevaks, Sub Postmasters and Branch Postmasters from Rs. 25/- to Rs. 50/- per month.

(vi) Even in the absence of any recomendations by Justice Talwar Committee in its report, provision of Severance Amount of Rs. 30,000/- in case of retirement or death, if the period of continuous employment of Gramin Dak Sevaks employee is minimum 20 years and Rs. 20,000/- if a Gramin Dak Sevak has completed 15-20 years of continuous employment, has been made. On absorption to regular departmental post, the Severance Amount of Rs. 20,000/- is payable after 15 years of continous employment.

Enhancing air-connectivity in the NER

2597. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Foundation of Aviation and Sustainable Tourism engaged by North Eastern Council has submitted its study report for enhancing air-connectivity in the North Eastern Region and the same has been circulated to all the North-Eastern States for their comments;